

Message Text

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PAGE 01 WELLIN 04753 220641Z
ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 HEW-06 INR-07
NSAE-00 PA-02 PRS-01 DHA-02 SCA-01 SCSE-00 USIA-15
EB-07 IO-13 DOTE-00 /069 W
----- 089057 /15

R 212258Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2500
INFO AMCONSUL AUCKLAND
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
CINCPAC
COMPACAREA COGARD SAN FRANCISCO
COMDT COGARD WASHDC
NAVSUPFORANTARCTICA DET DELTA CHCH

UNCLAS WELLINGTON 4753

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SWEL, OCLR, NZ
SUBJ: TORRENTIAL RAINS STRIKE WELLINGTON: HUTT VALLEY DISASTER AREA

SUMMARY: WELLINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA STRUCK BY 36 HOURS
TORRENTIAL DOWNPOUR DECEMBER 19 AND 20 RESULTING IN EXTENSIVE
FLOODING AND PROPERTY DAMAGE, PARTICULARLY IN HUTT VALLEY NORTH
OF CITY. PRELIMINARY DAMAGE ESTIMATES AT \$25-30 MILLION.
USCGC ICEBREAKER, BURTON ISLAND, RENDERED SIGNIFICANT
RELIEF ASSISTANCE. END SUMMARY.

1. MORE THAN ELEVEN INCHES RAIN FELL ON WELLINGTON DURING 36 HOUR
PERIOD DECEMBER 29 AND 20, INCLUDING EXCESS OF FIVE AND HALF
INCHES DURING SIX HOUR STRETCH MONDAY MORNING. RESULT WAS SEVERE
FLASH FLOODING, NUMEROUS MUD SLIDES, SEVERED TRANSPORTATION
AND COMMUNICATION LINKS AND EXTENSIVE PROPERTY DAMAGE IN HUTT
VALLEY SUBURBS NORTH OF CITY.
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2. WELLINGTON RESIDENTS SUFFERED ONLY INCONVENIENCE OF CURTAILED
BUS, RAIL AND COMMUTER TRAFFIC AS CITY CUT OFF FROM ALL POINTS
NORTH FOR SEVERAL HOURS DECEMBER 20. BUT IN HUTT VALLEY SUBURBS OF PE
TONE
AND TOKES VALLEY MUD SLIDES AND FLASH FLOODS SMASHED RESIDENTIAL

AND COMMERCIAL PROPERTY, TRAPPED PERSONS ON ROOF TOPS AND IN AUTOMOBILES AND ISOLATED SEVERAL DISTRICTS BY WIPING OUT HIGHWAY/RAIL LINKS.

3. AT PEAK OF CRITICAL PERIOD, USCGC BURTON ISLAND, IN PORT WELLINGTON ON WAY TO ANTARCTICA, EXTENDED OUTSTANDING ASSISTANCE TO POLICE AND CIVIL DEFENSE AUTHORITIES. BURTON ISLAND HELICOPTERS

PLUCKED STRANDED PERSONS FROM FLOODED AREAS, FLEW POLICE INTO ISLOATED LOCATIONS AND TRANSPORTED KEY GNZ OFFICIALS ON DAMAGE ASSESSMENT FLIGHTS. SHIP HAS ALSO MADE AVAILABLE BLOOD DONORS, EMERGENCY FOOD SERVICE AND CREW VOLUNTEERS TO ASSIST IN DIGGING OUT PROCESS.

4. LOSS TO HUMAN LIFE LIMITED TO TWO WITH SEVERAL SCORE ASSOCIATED INJURIES. NO AMERICANS REPORTED AMONG CASUALTIES.

5. MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS ADVISED LABATT DECEMBER 21 THAT PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PROPERTY DAMAGE LIKELY TO AMOUNT TO \$25-30 MILLION.

6. BY MIDDAY DEC. 22 RAINS HAVE RESUMED AND THREAT OF ADDITIONAL HEAVY DOWNPOUR INDICATES THERE WILL BE DELAY IN CLEAN-UP EFFORT. SELDEN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: NATURAL DISASTERS, STORMS, DISASTER REPORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 21 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976WELLIN04753
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760469-0366
From: WELLINGTON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761222/aaaaatbl.tel
Line Count: 86
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: buchant0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 18 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <18 JUN 2004 by chengls>; APPROVED <12 NOV 2004 by buchant0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TORRENTIAL RAINS STRIKE WELLINGTON: HUTT VALLEY DISASTER AREA SUMMARY: WELLINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA STRUCK BY 36 HOURS TORRENTIAL DOWNPOUR DECEMBER 19 AND 20 RESULTING I
TAGS: SWEL, OCLR, NZ
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006